

received
2/26/04
February 25, 2004

To Whom It May Concern,
Regarding STB Finance docket no. 34284,

#E1-655
RZ

My name is Lois Hoeslcy, and I and my husband, Dave own property in the Quihi area that will be affected by the proposed railroad. I would like to comment on most of the topics defined in the letter we received from the surface transportation board.

To begin, we feel that one of the most serious impacts of building a railroad in this region relates to the water resources. Any structure of this magnitude will affect water drainage and flow to this area. This area has a long history of being a flood prone area. The current topography allows small creeks to drain relatively quickly with most precipitation; however, a railroad would certainly affect this drainage. Rain would not be able to drain as quickly and aggravate flooding problems. Some areas would have increased water flow, which, in turn, would erode some locations that previously had minimum erosion issues. The implications of this lead to biological impacts.

Our home faces Quihi creek. We are fortunate to observe many breeds of migrating birds throughout the year. The existence of a new large structure of a railroad would change water flow patterns (as previously mentioned), that in turn would affect the natural balance of the fish in these small streams, which, in turn, would affect these birds. There are many more species dependant on these creeks throughout the year, including bobcats, deer, crayfish as well as many others that should become evident in your study.

We are concerned with land use, and environmental justice; however, I believe our concerns for these areas overlap what I will include this discussion in your sections for visual resources and socioeconomics. We are very concerned about the impacts of noise and vibration to our area. The noise of these proposed trains will disturb all living things in the area, and I think that many of the subtle impacts of this noise will be missed in a short study. We have a historical structure on our property and are worried about the long term impact of vibration to this structure (the site where the last American Indian was killed by an Alsatian settler, I've been told), particularly with the "Alternative 1" rail route. I believe other property owners with these old stone houses have similar concerns. A study cannot simulate the reality of long term, low frequency vibrations to this and the other historical structures of this area. As an example of this, I refer to the fall of the Tacoma Bridge when the resonant frequency and oscillation was

met by a light, sustained wind. This occurred over time, not due to a sudden incident. The impact of ground vibration to these structures concerns me.

With respect to the recreational and visual resources, we would like to mention several things. Our personal view and use of our area would be adversely affected by the railroad. Trinity University Astronomy and Physics Department uses our land as their dark site for viewing stars and galaxies by their students. The noise and vibration of a train going by (especially with "Alternative 1") would affect their telescopes and view. The general public would be affected also. Most people visiting Medina county are looking for a nice drive in the country. The proposed rail line would affect all of them.

When considering socioeconomic impact, we hope the board will not only consider the immediate impact, but also the long term consequences of development. The location of this railroad would divide Medina County down the middle, and consequently will divide future developments on either side. The history of Medina County and its development are directly related to the railroad. Castroville began as the big city of Medina County, but after the great effort of keeping the railroad from going through that city (due to opposition of the type of development that would come from the railroad's presence), the county seat went to Hondo. Both cities felt and still feel they did the right thing for their citizens. Castroville did not want the railroad and Hondo did. This proposed railroad runs between these two towns. This proposed development is a modern day re-enactment of that past conflict. The local residents view the railroad one way or another, depending on how they see the development that will come with it. The people here know their family history very well; most can tell you when their ancestors came to America. Please carefully consider the history of this area in your study. Please understand that this is not just a railroad here. The issue of how Medina County grows is affected by this decision.

Thank you for your time.

Lois and Dave Hocsley